

## PSYCHIATRY

# Psychiatrist to Aid Court

► PSYCHIATRISTS SHOULD be called on to advise the court or an attorney as to whether the testimony of a witness is to be believed, Dr. Henry A. Davidson, psychiatrist of Washington, D. C., urges in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (Jan.).

It has long been common practice to require that a person making a claim for personal injury or the defendant in a criminal case submit to medical examination when there is any question about his mental condition.

A witness, however, cannot be required to submit to examination. And often the question of which driver was negligent in case of an accident may depend on the testimony of one bystander. This witness might be a senile psychotic, an alcoholic or a mental defective, yet his story is accepted if he can talk clearly and convincingly.

The psychiatrist would not be permitted to testify as to the competency of the witness, especially if his only examination of the witness is the observation of his behavior and his words in court.

Nevertheless, he can help to prevent a miscarriage of justice by advising the at-

torney in the case, and sometimes coaching him on what questions to ask in cross-examination.

The psychiatrist must realize, however, that his questions may seem irrelevant to the court. Thus, realizing the forgetfulness of old people, the psychiatrist may have his doubts that an elderly witness can actually remember details of an accident that happened months ago.

He might advise a question like, "What did you have for breakfast this morning?" This would probably bring laughs from the jury who would not see the connection.

Delusions of marital infidelity are common symptoms of senile psychotics, but a judge probably would not permit asking a witness to an automobile accident if he thinks his wife is unfaithful to him.

Principal mental disorders that affect the capacity of a witness are, according to Dr. Davidson, mental deficiency, drug addiction, alcoholism, personality disorders, certain organic brain involvements and some forms of psychoneurosis. Yet many of these make plausible, if misleading, witnesses.

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ing ammonium chloride reached the earth's surface, it would contain alkaline earth halides, ammonia, hydrogen and nitrogen, Dr. Rubin said. It appears, he stated, that the available nitrogen on the earth's surface and the halide dissolved in the oceans could come from the same source, ammonium chloride.

Dr. Rubin calculated that the total amounts of nitrogen and halide are roughly in balance, supporting the theory.

The accretion mechanism for the formation of the ocean also seems adequate to explain transport of both nitrogen and chloride to the earth's surface, he concluded.

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## ARCHAEOLOGY

# Ancients Ate Horse Meat

► DISCOVERY OF a rock shelter in the Dordogne region of South Central France, where prehistoric hunters rested from the chase and ate their kill, is reported by Prof. Hallam L. Movius Jr., Harvard anthropologist.

Oldest of the remains found in the shelter date back to 25,000 years ago. Most recent were 18,000 years old. Flint weapons found at the site and the remains of the animals the ancient hunters killed sketch an outline of man's development over these thousands of years.

Man's dinner table 25,000 years ago featured mainly horse meat. Seven thousand years later, tastes had changed or, perhaps, the availability of horses, for by then the reindeer had replaced the horse on the menu. By the latter part of this period, some 18,000 years ago, the hunters had become much more selective. They were choosing only the two to three-year-old reindeers from the herds.

"This might indicate," Prof. Movius commented, "that the hunters were using some type of a missile weapon either hand thrown or hurled by mechanical means since it would have been difficult to do such selecting by hand weapons."

The reindeer hunters may also have had a higher and more stable form of social organization, pooling their hunting resources and pulling away from the individual hunter styles of their predecessors, he suggested.

Preliminary excavations at the site last summer were interrupted because a French farm family have their home and barn on the same site occupied by their prehistoric ancestors so many thousands of years ago. They have now agreed to sell the property in the interests of science. Prof. Movius estimates that from five to six years will be needed to complete the excavation survey.

Some 250 sites in the surrounding area have already been surveyed, but this one, "Abri Pataud," is believed one of the largest and richest ever recorded in western Europe. The animal remains are the best preserved and the most complete upper Palaeolithic materials found in recent years.

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## GEOLOGY

## Oceans Formed by Water Seeping Out of Volcanoes

► NEW CALCULATIONS to support the theory that the earth's oceans were formed by steady surface seepage of water from volcanoes have been reported by Dr. Thor Rubin of Ohio State University in *Science* (Jan. 8).

Dr. Rubin's calculations show that the basic structure of sea water, its salt content and other chemical characteristics can be explained by chemicals seeping into the oceans in the water from volcanoes.

By the time the water solution contain-